

Open Forum 3

Web Site Transcript

Chapter 7

A = Host

B = Guest 1

C = Guest 2

A: A dog is a man's best friend, they say, and to thousands of blind and partially-sighted people, a seeing-eye dog is essential for an independent life. But dogs can help other people, too. Today, we meet two very special dogs and their owners. I'm Suzie MacLeish and this is *Suzie's Show*.

A: Hello everyone. Daniel seemed just like any other kid when he was born. But soon, his parents were worried. He couldn't sit up straight, and he didn't seem to be developing like their other children. So, they went to a specialist doctor and learned that Daniel has a form of muscular dystrophy. Muscular dystrophy is a disease in which the muscles of the body become weaker over time. Most people with this disease need a wheelchair because their arms and legs become very weak, and they have difficulty standing. Daniel's condition became worse and now, he needs help with every aspect of his life. But he has remained cheerful and independent, all thanks to his four-legged friend. Please welcome Daniel and his dog, Yogi.

A: Daniel, Yogi, welcome to the show.

B: Thank you, Suzie, it's a pleasure to be here.

A: Daniel, why don't you tell us a little about your condition?

B: I have something called Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy. That means that my muscles are very weak. I need help getting dressed and undressed, or moving around. As you can see, I need this wheelchair. My other wheelchair's a Porsche!

A: I see you have a good sense of humor! Does this help you cope with your disability?

B: Yes, sometimes I joke around but things have been much better since we got Yogi.

Yogi's my dog! I don't know how I could live without him.

A: Now, Yogi's not just any dog, is he?

B: Oh no, Suzie, Yogi is a very special dog. I got him from a wonderful charity called Dogs for the Disabled. They train assistance dogs to help people with disabilities. They recently started training dogs for young adults, and I was so lucky to get one. I'm only the third teen in Britain to be given an assistance dog.

A: That's amazing! Daniel, how does Yogi help you?

B: Yogi is so clever. He helps me get dressed in the morning. He can switch the light on and off. If I fall over, he makes a special bark so that my parents know they need to come and get me. At night, Yogi goes to bed at the same time as me, but if my blankets fall over, Yogi picks them up and makes sure I don't get cold. He's like another mother—except he won't tell me to stop watching TV!

A: Dogs for the Disabled has trained over 280 dogs since 1988. Each client has their own story, just like Daniel. Let's meet another person who's benefited from a dog for the disabled. Please welcome Erica and her assistance dog, Muffin.

A: Erica, Muffin, welcome to the show.

C: Thank you, Suzie. Sit, Muffin, sit! She's a bit excited by the bright lights.

A: That's OK. Erica, would you tell us how you came to need an assistance dog?

C: Nearly ten years ago, I developed a rare brain virus.

A: You were seriously ill and in the hospital, weren't you?

C: Yes, I was. I was taken to a wonderful hospital in Chicago, where the doctors saved my life. And now, I can walk but not very well, my hands don't always work properly, and I don't have good balance.

A: So you fall over a lot?

C: Not a lot, but if I can't hold on to something, I sometimes fall.

A: How does Muffin help you?

C: Well, if I fall over, Muffin can actually help me to stand up, or she can get help.

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A: She helps you to stand up? But she's so small!

C: Yes, but she's very clever and very strong!

A: How else has Muffin helped you live with your condition?

C: Muffin is always there. She's a great companion. When my husband is at work, I'm never alone because I have the dog. She's a friend. It's that simple.

A: Daniel, do you think of Yogi as a friend?

B: Yes, I do. He's patient, and understanding, and makes me happy when I'm sad. I think that's what a friend should be.

Also, I think Yogi has given me a lot of self-confidence. When I go out with Yogi, people don't avoid me any more. They smile and play with the dog. I'm less alone in the world now...

C: I take Muffin everywhere! I have a good friend who doesn't like dogs very much, but even she likes Muffin now. Well, a little bit!

A: Unfortunately, we're out of time. Daniel, Erica, thank you so much for sharing your stories with us today. You can find out more about Dogs for the Disabled by visiting their website, www.dogsforthedisabled.org. See you next time.